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SUBJECT: IN FRUSTRATION, POLISH GOVERNING PARTY CALLS FOR
EARLY ELECTIONS

¶1. (SBU) Declaring "no other way out" of Poland's ongoing political stalemate, governing Law and Justice (PiS) leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski announced March 18 that his party will seek to dissolve parliament and hold new elections in May, prior to Pope Benedict XVI's scheduled visit to Poland at the end of that month. Several opposition parties, including the centrist Civic Platform (whose 131 seats are alone nearly enough to block the self-dissolution measure, which requires a two-thirds majority), reacted negatively to the proposal, almost ensuring its defeat should it come to a vote as planned April 6.

¶2. (SBU) In that event, Kaczynski and other senior PiS officials stated that they would form a coalition government with the populist Self-Defense party and another party, most probably the Peasants Party (PSL). Self-Defense leader Andrzej Lepper welcomed the notion of a formal coalition, even if only until November local elections, when parliamentary elections (in Lepper's -- and PO's -- view) could be run. Lepper indicated that he wouldn't even require a deputy prime minister position for himself (Self-Defense is reportedly most interested in the agriculture, environment and labor ministries). The other signatory to the now-virtually-dead "Stabilization Pact," the right-wing League of Polish Families (LPR), would be shut out of such a coalition, in recognition of LPR's "aggressiveness" toward PiS in recent weeks and PiS's own strategic interest in supplanting that party entirely.

¶3. (SBU) For now (which, with PiS, literally means right now -- we may hear a different story tomorrow), Kaczynski and Prime Minister Marcinkiewicz are excluding the possibility of forcing new elections through the resignation of the PM and his cabinet (new elections would be mandated should no other candidate get an absolute majority). With odd logic, both explained that the government is doing a good job and there's no reason for it to resign; rather, parliament should dissolve itself and new elections should be run as soon as possible.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: In keeping with its established practice, PiS appears to be pursuing at least two aims simultaneously. This latest threat of new elections may indeed represent a new determination on PiS's part to go for broke and seek an absolute majority (or at least knock a few parties out of parliament), but it may also be that PiS is aiming at forging a more solid -- if temporary -- coalition, as it builds the case for re-running the vote. Following his March 18 announcement, Kaczynski declared the Stabilization Pact a "terrible mistake, perhaps the worst in his life," arguing that PiS should have sought spring elections when it had the chance. However the next few weeks play out, it seems that early parliamentary elections -- whether in May, this summer, or in November, are now rather more likely than not.

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